

BEYOND THE ORCHARD

ESSAYS ON THE MARTYROLOGY



SELF-PORTRAIT / 79

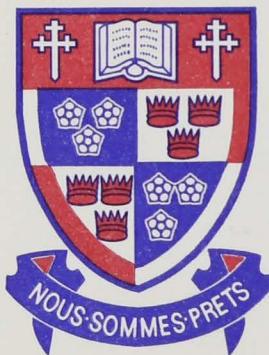
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**BEYOND THE ORCHARD:
ESSAYS ON
THE MARTYROLOGY**

AN H PROJECT

WEST COAST LINE

VANCOUVER 1997

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PREFACE

Beyond the Orchard is a collection of essays by participants in a collaborative graduate seminar on bpNichol's *The Martyrology*. The two seminars, fall and winter terms (September 94 - April 95) at the University of Calgary and spring term (January - April 95) at Simon Fraser University, held a listserv discussion during the winter, met in Vancouver in November, and held a colloquium in Calgary, April 7-8, 1995 where these seminar papers were first presented. The students were later given the opportunity to reconsider what they had written, both in response to discussions at the colloquium and to individual comments we made directly to our own students. Otherwise, except for copy-editing, the essays appear pretty much in the form they were submitted. Our intent is to make available to scholars and readers of *The Martyrology* the broad range of critical attention evident in the seminars, often related to particular concerns furthering the academic and theoretical interests of each student.

Although we, as ourselves "historical" readers—and friends—of bpNichol, had an allegiance to *The Martyrology*, the research undertaken in the seminars encouraged the questioning of critical continuities and allowed for readings that could incorporate the proliferation of theoretical possibilities since Nichol's death in 1988. What we desired, then, were inquiries that would not only reflect but articulate the critical reception of *The Martyrology* in current academic contexts.

As a means of setting the critical wheels in motion, the students worked together on a writing and publication project that would foster an open-ended critique of *Tracing the Paths*, a representative collection of essays on *The Martyrology* appearing only months before bp died. Nichol knew the contributors to this volume (a characteristic of his relationship to readers) and even collaborated by including new material from his on-going long poem. The students in the seminar, with one exception, had not met bpNichol, which meant that, as readers, they inhabited a critical site "beyond" that of *Tracing the Paths*, and coming "later" they were in a position to construct their own contemporary relationship to those readers. For the class project, each student addressed—on no more than two sides of a sheet (8.5 x 11 inches), in a form of choice—some aspect of *Tracing*. The contributions were then gathered together in a folder and printed in a limited edition as *Begin Began*. We (FW and RM) contributed a book mark. Space limits have not allowed us to incorporate this gathering in *Beyond the Orchard*—but copies are available through *West Coast Line*.

Our thanks to Ellie Nichol for generously supporting this publication as the first H Project. An H Project can be any publication, event, or activity that is designated as such in recognition of its ties to bpNichol's work. "If you see an H beyond the orchard..." is the rule of thumb.